

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04521 071528Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4521

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, LE
SUBJECT: AS SAFIR EDITORIAL ON FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER
BOUTROS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM
SCATHING EDITORIAL ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS IN AUGUST 6
EDITION OF AS SAFIR, THE LEADING LEFTIST NEWSPAPER IN
LEBANON.

2. "SOME FOREIGN MINISTERSIMPROVE THE STATE, BECAUSE THEY
CONSIDER THEMSELVES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICIES OF THE
ENTIRE COUNTRY, NOT FOR THE POLICY OF A GROUP IN THE
COUNTRY. THEY WISH TO ELEVATE THE COUNTRY TO A HIGHER PLANE,
NOT AFFECTED BY SHIMS, FANATICISM, FACTIONAL OR PARTISAN
PRESSURES. SALIM TAKLA, HABIB ABU SHAHLA, HAMID FRANJIYAH,
PHILIP TAKLA AND OTHER FORMER LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTERS
WERE LIKE THIS . . .

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04521 071528Z

3. "THE PRESENT FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER, FOUAD
BOUTROS, WHO SUCCEDED CAMILLE CHAMOUN, IS MORE LIKE THE
LATTER THAN THE FORMER, BOTH IN REGARD TO THE GENERAL POLICIES
OF HIS TWO MINISTRIES, AND TO THE DETAILED APPLICATION
OF THESE POLICIES, INCLUDING THE SCANDULOUS RESHUFFLE
WHICH HE CARRIED OUT IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND THE ARMY...

4. "THE ARMY UNDER FOUAD BOUTROS CAN BE SUMMED UP BY SAYING THAT IT IS IN A STATE OF CONFUSION: AHMAD AL HAJJ RESIGNS IN FRUSTRATION, WHILE SA'AD HADDAD AND SAMI SHADIAC DEAL WITH THE STATE AS IF THEY REPRESENTED A STATE, SHELL THE STATE'S ARMY WITH THEIR GUNS AND ULTIMATIUMS, NEGOTIATE WITH THE STATE THROUGH THE U.S. AND ISRAEL, AND DESPITE ALL OF THIS, CONTINUE TO BE ACTIVE OFFICERS IN THE LEBANESE ARMY. . .

5. "THE STATE WHICH FOUAD BOUTROS THROUGH HIS FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICIES IS TRYING TO BUILD IS A PITIFUL STATE, HUMILIATED BY ITS ENEMIES AND THOSE WHO COLLABORATE WITH ITS ENEMY. SUCH A STATE HAS NO PLACE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

6. ". . . SALIM AL-HOSS HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO A CAMPAIGN PORTRAYING HIM AS A NON-LEBANESE, FANATIC, FRIEND OF THE SYRIANS AND OF THE PALESTINIANS. IN TRUTH HOSS IS A NON-BIASED LEBANESE INTELLECTUAL. . . AN EXPERIENCED ECONOMIST, IDEAL ADMINISTRATOR, AND MODERN YOUNG POLITICIAN . . .

7. "SINCE THE FAMOUS BOMB WHICH WAS PLANTED IN BOUTROS' LUXURIOUS HOUSE IN ASHRAFIYAH, THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER HAS DEVOTED HIMSELF TO FULFILLING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04521 071528Z

GOALS OF THE LEBANESE FRONT, TO BUILDING A STATE ACCORDING TO THE LEBANESE FRONT'S LIKING BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY. THE ARABS, ESPECIALLY SYRIA, REPRESENT FEAR AND PROBLEMS, WHILE THE OTHERS, INCLUDING ISRAEL, REPRESENT 'BALANCE' AND GUARD THE STATE'S SOVEREIGNTY.

8. "IN DEFENSE AFFAIRS BOUTROS IS A DIPLOMAT WHO NEGOTIATES WITH SA'AD HADDAD AND SAMI SHADIAC. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE IS A COMBATANT WHO CALLS FOR STEADFASTNESS AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE ARABS." END UNCLASSIFIED.

9. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: THE AS SAFIR EDITORIAL REFLECTS THE LEBANESE MUSLIM COMMUNITY'S INCREASING HOSTILITY TOWARDS BOUTROS. IT ALSO COMES IN THE WAKE OF NUMEROUS REPORTS SHOWING THAT FOUAD BOUTROS AND SALIM AL-HOSS ARE BITTERLY DIVIDED OVER ESSENTIAL ISSUES NOW FACING LEBANON, INCLUDING THE FUTURE OF SA'AD HADDAD, RELATIONS WITH SYRIA, AND THE ROLE OF THE PREDOMINANTLY SYRIAN ARAB DETERRENT FORCE. THE EDITORIAL STRUCK A SENSITIVE NERVE, FOR BOUTROS COMPLAINED BITTERLY ABOUT IT TO THE AMBASSADOR ON AUGUST 6. END COMMENT.
PARKER

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